

For convenience, all claims as they are currently pending in the application are reproduced herein and read as follows:

THE CLAIMS:

1. (Previously Presented) A document control apparatus for storing and controlling electronic documents accessible from an external apparatus, comprising:
 - registering means for registering electronic documents to a storage, the electronic documents being transmitted from an external transmitting apparatus;
 - period controlling means for storing information of a document control period of the electronic documents registered by said registering means;
 - keeping means for keeping the electronic documents in the storage for a predetermined period even after the document control period of the electronic document has expired;
 - access prohibiting means for prohibiting access from the external apparatus to the electronic document whose document control period has expired;
 - period updating means for updating the document control period for an extension of the document control period based on a user confirmation;
 - temporary access allowing means for allowing temporary access to the electronic document whose document control period has expired based on a predetermined charge; and
 - transferring means for transferring the electronic document to the external apparatus based on a user request,

wherein the transferred electronic document is a document whose document control period has not expired, a document whose document control period has been extended by said period updating means, or a document to which temporary access has been allowed by said temporary access allowing means.

2. (Previously Presented) The document control apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

document processing means for updating and/or deleting the electronic document stored in the storage; and

document searching means for searching electronic documents stored in the storage.

3. (Previously Presented) The document control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said period controlling means stores the information of the document control period together with a body of the electronic document embedded in the electronic document.

4. (Previously Presented) The document control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the electronic document comprises:

control information of an electronic document including the information of the document control period;

attached information of an electronic document including summary information of a document and/or index information; and

a body of an electronic document transmitted from the external transmitting apparatus.

5. (Previously Presented) The document control apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the electronic document stored in the storage comprises link information instead of the body of the electronic document, the link information indicating a location of the body of the electronic document.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Previously Presented) The document control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said keeping means keeps an electronic document that is frequently accessed from the external apparatus for a predetermined period and in a fixed volume, and wherein said temporary access allowing means allows the temporary access to the stored electronic document based on a predetermined charge different from a regular charge for accessing the document.

8. (Previously Presented) The document control apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said document searching means notifies the external apparatus of the information of document control period of the searched electronic document.

9. (Previously Presented) The document control apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

user information storing means for storing information of registered users;

charge information storing means for storing charge information; and
history information storing means for storing information of electronic
document access histories.

10. (Previously Presented) The document control apparatus according to
claim 2, wherein, when update or deletion of the electronic document is instructed from the
external apparatus, said document processing means determines whether or not to accept
the update or the deletion of the electronic document based on access authority information
set in advance.

11. (Previously Presented) A document control system comprising:
a document control apparatus for storing and controlling electronic
documents; and
an external apparatus to which an access control service of said electronic
document is provided from said document control apparatus, wherein said document
control apparatus comprises:

registering means for registering electronic documents to a storage, the
electronic documents being transmitted from an external transmitting apparatus;

period controlling means for storing information of a document control
period of the electronic documents registered by said registering means;

keeping means for keeping the electronic documents in the storage for a
predetermined period even after the document control period of the electronic document
has expired;

access prohibiting means for prohibiting access from the external apparatus to the electronic document whose document control period has expired;

period updating means for updating said document control period for an extension of the document control period based on a user confirmation;

temporary access allowing means for allowing temporary access to the electronic document whose document control period has expired based on a predetermined charge; and

transferring means for transferring the electronic document to the external apparatus based on a user request,

wherein the transferred electronic document is a document whose document control period has not expired, a document whose document control period has been extended by said period updating means, or a document to which temporary access has been allowed by said temporary access allowing means.

12. (Previously Presented) The document control system according to claim 11, wherein said document control apparatus further comprises:

document processing means for updating and/or deleting said electronic document stored in the storage; and

document searching means for searching electronic documents stored in the storage.

13. (Previously Presented) The document control system according to claim 11, wherein said period controlling means of said document control apparatus stores

the information of the document control period together with a body of said electronic document embedded in said electronic document.

14. (Previously Presented) The document control system according to claim 11, wherein said electronic document comprises:

control information of an electronic document including the information of the document control period;

attached information of an electronic document including summary information of a document and/or index information; and

a body of an electronic document transmitted from the external transmitting apparatus .

15. (Previously Presented) The document control system according to claim 14, wherein the electronic document stored in the storage comprises link information instead of the body of the electronic document, the link information indicating a location of the body of the electronic document.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously Presented) The document control system according to claim 16, wherein said keeping means of said document control apparatus keeps an electronic document that is frequently accessed from the external apparatus for a predetermined period and in a fixed volume, and wherein said temporary access allowing

means allows the temporary access to the stored electronic document based on a predetermined charge different from a regular charge for accessing the document.

18. (Previously Presented) The document control system according to claim 12, wherein said document searching means of said document control apparatus notifies the external apparatus of the information of the document control period of the searched electronic document .

19. (Previously Presented) The document control system according to claim 11, wherein said document control apparatus further comprises:

user information storing means for storing information of registered users;

charge information storing means for storing charge information; and

history information storing means for storing information of electronic document access histories.

20. (Previously Presented) The document control system according to claim 12, wherein, when update or deletion of said electronic document is instructed from the external apparatus, said document processing means of said document control apparatus determines whether or not the update or the deletion of said electronic document should be accepted based on access authority information set in advance.

21. (Previously Presented) A document control method applied to a document control system having a document control apparatus for storing and controlling

electronic documents and an external apparatus to which an access control service of said electronic document is provided from said document control apparatus, comprising:

a registering step of registering electronic documents to a storage, the electronic documents being transmitted from an external transmitting apparatus;

a period controlling step of storing information of a document control period of the electronic documents registered by said registering step ;

a keeping step of keeping the electronic documents in the storage for a predetermined period even after the document control period of the electronic document has expired;

an access prohibiting step of prohibiting means for prohibiting access from the external apparatus to the electronic document whose document control period has expired;

a period updating step of updating said document control period for an extension of the document control period based on a user confirmation;

a temporary access allowing step of allowing temporary access to the electronic document whose document control period has expired based on a predetermined charge; and

a transferring step of transferring the electronic document to the external apparatus based on a user request,

wherein the transferred electronic document is a document whose document control period has not expired, a document whose document control period has been extended by said period updating means, or a document to which temporary access has been allowed by said temporary access allowing step.

22. (Previously Presented) The document control method according to claim 21, further comprising:

a document processing step of updating and/or deleting said electronic document stored in the storage; and

a document searching step of searching electronic documents stored in the storage.

23. (Previously Presented) The document control method according to claim 21, wherein said document control period information is stored together with a body of said electronic document embedded in said electronic document in said period controlling step.

24. (Previously Presented) The document control method according to claim 21, wherein said electronic document comprises:

control information of an electronic document including said information of the document control period;

attached information of an electronic document including summary information of a document and/or index information; and

a body of an electronic document transmitted from the external transmitting apparatus.

25. (Previously Presented) The document control method according to claim 24, wherein the electronic document stored in the storage comprises link

information instead of the body of the electronic document, the link information indicating a location of the body of the electronic document.

26. (Canceled)

27. (Previously Presented) The document control method according to claim 21, wherein said keeping step keeps an electronic document that is frequently accessed from the external apparatus for a predetermined period and in a fixed volume, and wherein said temporary access allowing step allows the temporary access to the stored electronic document based on a predetermined charge different from a regular charge for accessing the document.

28. (Previously Presented) The document control method according to claim 22, wherein said document searching step notifies the external apparatus of the information of the document control period of the searched electronic document.

29. (Previously Presented) The document control method according to claim 21, further comprising:

- a user information storing step of storing information of registered users;
- a charge information storing step of storing charge information; and
- a history information storing step of storing information of electronic document access histories.

30. (Previously Presented) The document control method according to claim 22, wherein, when update or deletion of said electronic document is instructed from the external apparatus, whether or not the update or the deletion of said electronic document should be accepted is determined based on access authority information set in advance in said document processing step.

31. (Previously Presented) A computer readable storage medium storing a program for executing a document control method applied to a document control system having a document control apparatus for storing and controlling electronic documents, and an external apparatus to which an access control service of said electronic document is provided from said document control apparatus, wherein said document control method comprises:

a registering step of registering electronic documents to a storage, the electronic documents being transmitted from an external transmitting apparatus;

a period controlling step of storing information of a document control period of the electronic documents registered by the registering step ;

a keeping step of keeping the electronic documents in the storage for a predetermined period even after the document control period of the electronic document has expired;

an access prohibiting step of prohibiting means for prohibiting access from the external apparatus to the electronic document whose document control period has expired;

a period updating step of updating said document control period for an extension of the document control period based on a user confirmation;

a temporary access allowing step of allowing temporary access to the electronic document whose document control period has expired based on a predetermined charge; and

a transferring step of transferring the electronic document to the external apparatus based on a user request,

wherein the transferred electronic document is a document whose document control period has not expired, a document whose document control period has been extended by said period updating means, or a document to which temporary access has been allowed by said temporary access allowing step.

32. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 31, wherein said document control method, further comprising:

a document processing step of updating and/or deleting said electronic document stored in the storage; and

a document searching step of searching electronic documents stored in the storage.

33. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 31, wherein said information of said document control period is stored together with a body of said electronic document embedded in said electronic document in said period controlling step.

34. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 31, wherein said electronic document comprises:

control information of an electronic document including said information of the document control period;

attached information of an electronic document including summary information of a document and/or index information; and

a body of an electronic document transmitted from the external transmitting apparatus .

35. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 34, wherein the electronic document stored in the storage comprises link information instead of the body of the electronic document, the link information indicating a location of the body of the electronic document.

36. (Canceled)

37. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 31, wherein said keeping step keeps an electronic document that is frequently accessed from the external apparatus for a predetermined period and in a fixed volume, and wherein said temporary access allowing step allows the temporary access to the stored electronic document based on a predetermined charge different from a regular charge for accessing the document.

38. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 32, wherein said document searching step notifies the external apparatus of the information of the document control period of the searched electronic document.

39. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 31, wherein said document control method further comprises:

- a user information storing step of storing information of registered users;
- a charge information storing step of storing charge information; and
- a history information storing step of storing information of electronic document access histories.

40. (Previously Presented) The storage medium according to claim 32, wherein, when update or deletion of said electronic document is instructed from the external apparatus, whether or not the update or the deletion of said electronic document should be accepted is determined based on access authority information set in advance in said document processing step.